

VZCZCXRO1365  
RR RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHTRO #0170/01 0501647  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 191647Z FEB 07  
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1847  
INFO RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 2097  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 0428  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0653  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0564  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0142  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0310  
RUEHVT/AMEMBASSY VALLETTA 0147

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TRIPOLI 000170

SIPDIS  
DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/7/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [LY](#)  
SUBJECT: LIBYA: AISHA GADHAFI IN THE BLACK

REF: 06 TRIPOLI 198

CLASSIFIED BY: Elizabeth Fritschle, POL/ECON Counselor, U.S.  
Embassy Tripoli, State.  
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Despite claiming to be a charitable NGO that provides disaster assistance in sub-Saharan Africa and support to Libyan women while promoting traditional Islamic values, Dr. Aisha Muammar Al-Gadhafi's Wa'atassemo Charity Society is primarily an outlet for Gadhafi's oldest daughter to have her picture taken and pursue her own business interests (see reftel). Wa'atassemo's 12 employees appear to spend nearly all of their time organizing business conferences -- only some of which actually happen. Wa'atassemo sees itself as an intermediary between government and business and believes that by extracting concessions from foreign companies looking to do business in Libya it can further Aisha Gadhafi's unclear development agenda. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Wa'atassemo Foundation Director of Events Abdunnasser Al-Najah and Public Relations Manager Mohammed Al-Hawari met with Poloff on February 6 to discuss Waatasemo's current projects. Over the last two years, Emboffs have made repeated requests to meet with Waatasemo to learn more about civil society and propose cooperative activities promoting MEPI objectives. Until now, Embassy has never been granted a meeting and only was able to learn about Waatasemo projects after the fact. According to promotional literature, Aisha Gadhafi created the Wa'atassemo Foundation in 2002 as a charitable non-government organization (NGO) promoting traditional Islamic values that would provide disaster assistance in sub-Saharan Africa and also assistance to marginalized social groups, particularly women and children, within Libya. The Foundation employs 12 "active" employees, which apparently includes only event planning and support staff. (An additional 30 "inactive" employees are also on the Wa'atassemo payroll.) Aisha Gadhafi maintains an office at the Wa'atassemo headquarters but leaves the day-to-day running to Executive Director Ahmad Kajman. Kajman is the only Wa'atassemo staff member with any access to Aisha. Embassy believes that with a shift to add business development activities to the agenda, the organization is now more open to talking with us to learn about potential commercial partners. Asked what the word, "Wa'atassemo" meant, our interlocutors did not know the origin of the name. Subsequent research turned up the phrase, "Wat'asimu bihablillahi jami'un, wa la tararraqu," reportedly a well-known Quran quotation that translates as, "And cling to the rope of Allah, and do not divide," admonishing all Muslims to stand together. While in the past Aisha was known to dress western-style and dye her hair blonde, since forming Wa'atassemo she has appeared in public in conservative Islamic-style long, black robes with her dark hair

covered by a scarf; literally in the black.

¶13. (C) Asked about Wa'atassemo's current projects, Al-Najah mentioned four business conferences scheduled for 2007, including a banking and finance conference for foreign executives in March. Al-Najah said Wa'atassemo acts as an intermediary between the GOL and the business community -- facilitating visas, planning conferences, and hosting events. It does not do any projects of its own. Al-Najah said Wa'atassemo promotes social development in Libya by stressing to foreign companies their own social responsibility requirements. Al-Najah was unable to connect Wa'atassemo's conference planning with charitable work of any kind. Asked specifically about charitable work, he showed Poloff numerous pictures of Aisha Gadhafi receiving awards for sponsoring a Quran memorization contest for Muslim women. (NOTE: Al-Najah is a former RevCom member who speaks proudly of his 12 years working in the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation (MFA equivalent) Office of Protocol.)

¶14. (C) Both Al-Najah and Al-Hawari repeatedly mentioned that they could accomplish things in Libya for foreign business with the help of "Dr. Aisha" and her personal influence. Underscoring this point, Poloff ran into Al-Hawari on February 7 at the Libya Telecom and Technology headquarters. Al-Hawari said the Wa'atassemo office had a problem with its internet connection but that he insisted at first on fixing it "the right way" rather than by calling in his connections. However, after waiting for about three minutes, Al-Hawari's cell phone rang, he wrote down a name on a piece of paper, showed the paper to a receptionist, and smiled to Poloff as he was whisked into a back room, bypassing all the lines.

¶15. (C) COMMENT. Aisha last garnered international attention when she signed on to the legal consultancy supporting the defense of Saddam Hussein and she made remarks to the press denouncing the imprisonment and trial of Hussein (clearly, seeing a deposed dictator put on trial hits close to home for her). In addition to using Wa'atassemo to promote her public profile and personal interests, Aisha Gadhafi continues to use Wa'atassemo to pursue her own business adventures. Wa'atassemo's 2007 conference schedule -- and therefore, Aisha's interest -- runs the gamut from banking to transportation to telecommunications to, of course, petroleum. Al-Najah's comments illustrate the easiest way for a well-connected Gadhafi to make money in Libya -- wring it out of legitimate foreign businesses trying to operate here through "facilitation" fees. With Aisha and Wa'atassemo focused squarely on business ventures, while dabbling at charitable work, Libya still suffers from a lack of legitimate NGOs. END COMMENT.

¶16. (U) Bio Note: Aisha, married to a the son of a regime insider in 2006, recently gave birth to a son. Embassy was invited to send a representative to a celebration hosted by Safia Qadhafi at the Bab al-Azizia compound in Tripoli for wives of Ambassadors and prominent Libyan families. Guests at the party reported that the child was born in London, although the exact date was unknown.

CECIL